



United States Department of State

Washington, D. C. 20520

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM
S/S

June 24, 1985

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TO: The Secretary

THROUGH: P - Mr. Armacost

FROM: S/LPD - Otto J. Reich

SUBJECT: Nicaragua: A New Public Diplomacy Strategy

The recent Congressional debate over aid to the Nicaraguan Resistance, ~~despite the "No" vote~~, had good results in terms of (1) public education, (2) perceptions of the lawmakers, and, most importantly, (3) Congressional disdain for the Sandinista regime. Few in the Congress would today suggest that the Sandinistas are merely misguided democrats who need only a change to set a proper course. Rather, there is growing recognition that the Managua government is hostile, undemocratic, destabilizing, and allied with the Soviet Union.

Despite the changing perceptions, however, there are widespread doubts about whether the U.S. should aid forces seemingly bent on overthrowing the Sandinistas; what kind and how much aid to give; and whether the Resistance groups are worthy of American aid. Contrary arguments are that (1) we have no business toppling a government; (2) the Resistance cannot win; (3) the Resistance violates human rights; and (4) a rebel victory would not assure a democratic, pluralistic society.

Themes and Objectives

We need to simplify and focus our themes. The goal should be to move the Congressional doubters into the supporter column. Activities should address specific issues and perceptions essential to shaping the vote. Supporters should evaluate each proposed event with care, thereby assuring that marginal, time-consuming programs are avoided.

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Daniel Ortega's trip to Moscow after the last Congressional debate came as an eye opener to many who were wishfully unrealistic about the problems of dealing with the Sandinistas. Some of these will now want to change their vote, but will need strong support in the form of arguments to use in the next debate and with their constituents.

To help them, we will need to continue to reiterate that:

- Our four policy goals toward Nicaragua are constant, coherent, and consistent with the Contadora process;
- Our policy addresses a serious security threat to us and our allies;
- Experience has taught us that the Sandinistas only react to strong pressures;
- Our pressures on Nicaragua, including sanctions and support to the armed Opposition, are necessary to induce a change in behavior of the Sandinistas and as a means to divert resources from support for subversion and terror in Nicaragua's neighboring countries.

In addition, we should continue to publicize past Sandinista deeds and present directions. In doing so, points to emphasize are:

- the illegitimacy of the regime both before and after the elections
- repression
- press censorship
- consolidation of a one-party system
- drug trafficking
- export of subversion

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- the harboring of terrorists
- the Soviet bloc/radical Arab presence

Analysis of the recent debate shows fairly widespread agreement on most of the foregoing points, but the points must be repeated. The upcoming Congressional campaign must also address those questions most often raised by the doubters and the critics with respect to the nature, objectives, and viability of the opposition forces and of U.S. policy. Therefore, additional themes should be addressed:

1. The Sandinista threat to Central America, Mexico and the United States must be understood: Critics of Administration policy either do not understand or deliberately distort the Sandinista threat to regional and United States national security by placing it in a classic military context, as if Nicaragua were expected to invade the United States Gulf coast. The argument must be recast in an historical and geopolitical context to make it understandable. In Cuba, the Soviets already have a base to support political and military expansion and intelligence collection in the hemisphere. But Cuba is an island, cut off from the mainland. Nicaragua is on the mainland and, supported by Soviet and Cuban assistance, is attacking its neighbors by supporting subversion and guerrilla war. With fragile democracies surrounding Nicaragua, the threat is great. The real target is Mexico. Central America could be a detonator for a Mexican political time bomb.

2. The refugee argument supplements the national security threat: Communism is not the answer to Central America's social and economic problems. Whenever communism takes over a country, about 10% of the population flees. Communism produces repression, economic disaster, and refugees. Refugees from Central America have a land bridge to the U.S. border.

3. Resistance is the best alternative: Only the Resistance and the pressure it can bring to bear can prevent further consolidation of the Marxist-Leninist system and lead to pluralism and democratic rule.

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4. The Resistance respects human rights: Although Resistance forces admit to some abuses, Resistance policy affirms respect for the life and property of non-combatants and condemns abuses of any kind. The Sandinistas' sophisticated propaganda campaign, aimed squarely at American public opinion, has sought to portray any abuse as a Resistance abuse. Americans should be skeptical of claims coming from the Sandinista government or from individuals or groups known to sympathize with it.

5. The Resistance can succeed: Although the objective is not the outright toppling of the Sandinistas, but rather a dialogue for pluralism and democracy, the Resistance has the capability to force change in the existing order. The armed force that toppled Somoza numbered about 5,000. It is estimated that the combined Resistance today has more than 15,000 under arms. Furthermore, thousands more await arms, communications, and direction to join in the battle. Discontent in both rural and urban areas has reached the point that an uprising might occur if the situation (both economic and political) deteriorates any more.

6. A Resistance victory means democracy: The coalition opposing the Sandinistas is as broad as that which opposed Somoza. It includes many former Sandinistas, some of them one-time members of the ruling Junta. Having once ousted a dictatorship, they are now united in the struggle to overthrow that which replaced the earlier one. After so many years and lives, the Nicaraguan people will not tolerate further unrepresentative rule. Somocismo died with the revolution in 1979. The Resistance coalition is democratic in philosophy, practice, and objectives.

7. The Resistance wants dialogue and peace: The March 1 declaration of principles in San Jose, Costa Rica was the most recent Resistance effort to promote a peaceful resolution of differences through dialogue. The FDN, the Democratic Coordinator, and other opposition groups, both the civic opposition inside and outside Nicaragua and the armed opposition, have endorsed every call for dialogue issued by the Catholic bishops and other bodies. They have themselves called for a dialogue of national reconciliation on numerous occasions. These appeals for a cease-fire, peace, and the civilized resolution of

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disputes have gone unheeded by the Sandinistas. On the other hand, the FSLN states its desire for an international dialogue with the U.S. and Contadora, a dialogue which does not address the need for internal reconciliation and the rights and liberties of the Nicaraguan people.

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